



TOWN OF WARE

Planning & Community Development

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Minutes from June 12, 2017

Community Development Authority

Meeting held at Town Hall, 126 Main Street, Ware, MA

Authority members present: D. Gravel, B. Cooper, T. Opalinski, P. Opalinski,
Authority members absent: B. Adams
Staff present: Rubén Flores-Marzán
Public: Stuart Beckley (Town Manager), Ted Harvey (PVPC)

D. Gravel called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.; some items were taken out of order.

1. Administrative

- a. Minutes of May 15, 2017 – approved by general consensus.
- b. Authority member terms – Terms need to be staggered as stated in the Charter. CDA agreed that Paul will request a 3-year term; Tracy will request a 2-year term; and Brenda will request a 1-year term. Paul submitted his letter requesting reappointment.
- c. Distribution of Town Anti-Discriminatory Harassment Policy – all members present signed the policy, as required for all town employees and appointees.

2. Updates

- a. CDBG
 - i. FY2015 WRV (HR report) – final invoices in progress; shifting to FY2016 funds.

ii. FY2016 Prospect Street/Bank & Spring (HR report) –

1. HR report distributed; 2 PARP projects are finishing up.
2. Re-bid for Prospect Street construction was awarded to Borges Construction for \$449,335.30; original bid from J K Raymakers was for \$460,990.84; savings of \$11,655.54. CDA recognized significant savings from original bid and suggested that surplus funds could enhance other improvements for this project or for HR.

iii. FFY2017 CDBG application – no word.

- b. CDA acting as Redevelopment Authority (RA) – the CDA wants to fully understand powers of the CDA as it currently is. The CDA would like to act as a RA in order to buy, sell, and redevelop property and recover, recoup invested funds and reinvest them in similar projects; original funding source would be general fund or bonds. S. Beckley stated that CDA should consult with Town Counsel re MGL Ch. 121B Section 4 (states that Town Meeting can return RA powers). 121B and 121C discuss RA and Industrial Corporations; P. Opalinski read 2013 memo from previous director recommending not keeping RA powers. Could redevelopment be accomplished via our Housing Authority (HA)?

CDA asked for next steps for blighted/burnt properties. S. Beckley suggested that CDA could invite Building Inspector, Fire Inspector, and Board of Health Director to understand how they work with blighted properties. CDA could ask Holyoke or Springfield Building Inspectors for their approach. There was discussion of the following: opioid crisis as economic climate issue and related to housing; town bylaw Article 28 dealing with vacant and unkempt properties; S. Beckley stated that burnt/blighted buildings are a problem; possible recommendation to begin fines and litigation; what laws apply; good housing attorneys; B. Cooper will research attorneys and availability. Boston land court takes a long time to process applications to rid blighted properties (2 year process); E. Wloch wanted to create registry of blighted properties, in need of inspection.

c. Draft demolition procedure – see Item 4a.

3. Community Development Strategy (CDS) – T. Harvey and P&CD staff will work together to update the CDS. PVPC is currently waiting for DHCD's updated guidelines for CDS requirements. New effort should focus on economic development. Final CDS is due by December 2017; D. Gravel requested by November 2017. T. Harvey stated that we should use Survey Monkey again for citizen input in addition to a public hearing. Survey Monkey data should be collected by August 31. CDA suggested that

one question be related to social services. T. Opalinski mentioned that 2015 survey responses were predominantly about HR/PARP properties so we should broaden the questions. Rubén, Judi and Ted will set agenda for deliverables for CDS by Friday, December 1 with November 2017 CDA approval; survey due August 2017 and public hearing date to be determined; survey questions and CDS revisions by June 30 with CDA members providing input via e.mail.

B. Cooper asked if the Building Inspector (BI) would get involved in making sure blighted properties are compliant with current building code; landlords need to be held accountable. S. Beckley mentioned that BI and Fire Inspector (FI) inspect apartments. Owners abandon or sell properties when upgrades are required yet they cannot attain financial assistance. The Town is responsible for inspecting apartment properties with 3+ bedrooms. D. Gravel requested that BI attend our next meeting.

4. New Business

- a. 33 Vigeant, possible taking by Town – S. Beckley clarified that we received inconsistent information from property owners; CDA must have complete information in order to make a determination. Town must be effective when conveying how we address burnt properties as well as communication strategy when people make comments about how to spend public funds. Town needs to pressure, attorney, questions to attorneys beforehand; bring town officials to meet.

Suggested questions:

1. What can town do with burnt properties when owners do nothing?
2. Can town do a "finding of blight" for a property?
3. What is property owner responsibility for after it burns down?
4. Which town department is responsible?
5. Which town department can fix in the fastest timeframe?
6. Which entity that can address these issues w/o paying prevailing wage?
7. How to implement Article 28?
8. S. Beckley will research and get back to CDA
9. Can Program Income funds be used for legal advice?

- Invite property owners to CDA to begin conversation on how we can assist
- S. Beckley: possible BOH fines can be used for improvements
- Building Inspector and Fire Inspector work closely but BOH needs involvement as well; BOH has their own code and tends to work independently of other two inspectors. CDA should talk to all inspectors to see how we can help; safety issue and affects visual aesthetics and economic development, and town image. CDA would like advisory committee to establish priorities. S. Beckley will coordinate; asked if CDA wanted to pursue using PI funds for demolition; must talk to other department to see how to remove road blocks; how to use PI to assist in these efforts. D. Gravel

suggested June 22 lunch meeting: invite inspectors to discuss and coordinate.

- S. Beckley will discuss 33 Vigeant with Town Treasurer.

On June 22, CDA members met with the Town Manager, Building Inspector, Police Chief, Board of Health Director, Fire Inspector, and P&CD staff to discuss next steps. Rubén will attend the monthly Code Enforcement meetings and report back to the CDA as needed.

5. Other (any discussion and action may be postponed until next meeting)
 - a. Grant administration – T. Harvey provided information on grant administration and the Grant Management Plan. J. Mazik is available to meet and discuss it if the CDA requests.
6. Adjourn – **Motion** by B. Cooper to adjourn at 7:30 p.m. Seconded by P. Opalinski.

*Respectfully submitted by
Rubén Flores-Marzán, Director, and
Judi Mosso, Assistant to the Director*

Documents reviewed:

Minutes of May 15, 2017
Draft demolition procedure

Documents received:

Letter from Paul Opalinski requesting reappointment to CDA [submitted to Board of Selectmen on 6/13/2017]